

Vita launches new research award at Apimondia

President Viktor Yuschenko becomes Award patron

Vita (Europe) Ltd will launch an award to promote research into honeybee health at Apimondia, the world's largest honeybee event to be held in Dublin in August 2005.

President Viktor Yuschenko of the Ukraine, a life-long beekeeper, has agreed to become the Award's Patron. The award, valued at up to €10,000, will be made on a regular basis to help fund new honeybee health research. Any individual or organisation can apply.

"Through our global network of distributors we appreciate that there is still much to be done to provide safe and effective honeybee health treatments for the world's beekeeping industry," explained Jeremy Owen, Sales Director of Vita.

"We are naturally thrilled that President Yuschenko has agreed to become the Award's patron. As a beekeeper and a president, he fully understands the benefits of a healthy honeybee population to national economies.

"We hope this award will stimulate new research into diseases that affect honeybees. We will be especially, but not exclusively, interested in naturally-based treatments that are really effective since that is clearly a priority for many beekeepers."

Amongst the diseases and pests of particular interest to Vita are those which as yet have no known effective controls: the small hive beetle which is spreading globally and almost established a foothold in Europe last year; chalkbrood which seems to be increasing in prevalence in certain areas; and the long-term problems of varroa and foulbrood.

Vita will announce the winner of the inaugural Vita Research Award at Apimondia 2005.

Application details for the next award will appear on the Vita website in September 2005.

www.vita-europe.com

CONTENTS

VITA RESEARCH AWARD	1
EU DIRECTIVE UPDATE	1
EDITORIAL	2
VITA NEWS – APIGUARD, CHALKBROOD & VITASOL	2
ESTONIA FEATURE	3-4
BUZZWORDS	3-4



President Viktor Yuschenko of the Ukraine, a lifelong beekeeper, becomes patron of Vita's new award.

UPDATE European Directive & bees

The lobbying against the EU plan (Directive 2004/28/EC) to make medications for all food-producing animals, including bees, available only through vets seems to be making progress.

The EU is currently drawing up a list of possible exemptions and it is hoped bees will be on that list.

No date has yet been set for the production of the list.

EDITORIAL

LOBBYING PROGRESS

The beekeeping industry is a modest one, but when it comes to fighting a specific issue it can transform itself into a very effective lobbying force.



Although we are still awaiting a final decision from the EU on whether or not bee medications will have to be

made through vets, the signs are more hopeful than before.

The EU is considering whether bees will be included in a possible list of exemptions.

Let's hope that common sense prevails and that bees are on the list. And if they are, I think it will be in large part a result of beekeepers' lobbying. In the UK at least, they made a strong impact on the VMD, the government agency dealing with the issue, who seem to be convinced by the beekeepers' case.

APIMONDIA

Jeremy Owen and I look forward to seeing many of you in Ireland at Apimondia 2005. It promises to be an excellent week and I'm sure, like me, you will be interested to learn about the latest research into honeybee diseases.

I hope that our new research award will attract interest and help lead to progress in controlling the parasites and diseases that inhibit beekeeping.

Please do call by and see our brand new stand.

Dr Max Watkins
Technical Director
Vita (Europe) Ltd

NEW PRODUCT FOCUS

Vita news

US pollination crisis – Apiguard to the rescue?

Reports from the USA indicate serious pollination problems caused by a combination of varroa and sometimes poor weather conditions.

It started in the Californian almond groves where latest reports suggest that the almond harvest may be down by as much as 18%. But then came a stream of reports from places like New Hampshire and its cranberries, and the Upper Midwest and its apple crop.

Speaking to Newsmite, Dan Cummings, Director of the US Almond Board, said: "We need 1.4 million bee colonies – that's approximately half of the total number of colonies in the US – to pollinate California's almond crop. These colonies are becoming increasingly hard to find and this year we are hearing of colony losses of between 10% and 50% across the country. We are therefore very keen to have Apiguard officially approved for use in the USA as quickly as possible."

Vita is currently applying to have Apiguard registered in the USA where it will provide a much-needed extra weapon in an Integrated Pest Management strategy. Apistan and coumaphos are no longer effective in many parts of the US because resistance has built up to their active ingredients. Apiguard, based on thymol, will be a new product that is expected to bring considerable benefit.

First field trials of Vitasol

Tests in Egypt using Vita's proto-type treatment for the control of mites on agricultural crops have met with considerable success.

In first trials, Vitasol was tested on two types of mites in apple orchards and aubergine fields. Over a four-week period, 80% efficacy was recorded.

Apiguard fights chalkbrood?

Recent trials of Apiguard in Greece indicate that Apiguard is effective against chalkbrood as well as varroa.

Data collected over the past three years in Greece indicates that Apiguard has an efficacy of between 50% and 70% against chalkbrood. These are initial but very encouraging results, so Vita is commissioning further research.

Chalkbrood is often present in colonies and at times can be a real problem. It is caused by *Ascosphaera apis*, a fungal pathogen and its spores affect developing larva, covering them with a white, fluffy, cotton-wool type growth which eventually dries out to form the characteristic chalkbrood "mummies". In heavily infected colonies, the workers have difficulty in cleaning out the cells. The spores can remain viable for up to 15 years and are spread by drifting bees and beekeepers.

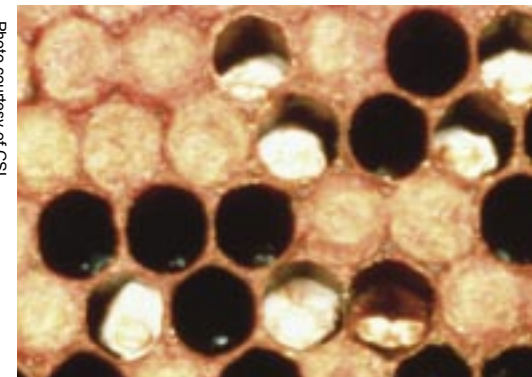


Photo courtesy of CSL

Developing chalkbrood mummies

The incidence and extent of chalkbrood is not fully understood. Smallish colonies under stress (especially from varroa) are usually most susceptible to chalkbrood. Re-queening sometimes helps, but until now there has been no effective treatment. Regionally, chalkbrood seems to be most prevalent in maritime climates – and often where pine trees are present.

DISTRIBUTOR FEATURE

View from the Baltic

Zoovetvaru, Vita's Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian distributor



Interviewed by Newsmite, Margus Kuklane Managing Director of Zoovetvaru Vita's Estonian

distributor sees a bright future for Baltic beekeeping in the EU, and would like to see better regulation of bee treatments to ensure that beekeepers get quality bee medications and consumers get a fine product.

Estonia has had a turbulent history and its beekeeping history reflects this (see Buzz Words p4). Having gained independence for the second time in one century, the country is now part of the EU and is seeing a steady resurgence of its beekeeping industry.

Varroa's surprise arrival in Estonia

Estonia has had to deal with varroa for almost 30 years. Its early arrival in the

mid 1970s initially puzzled beekeepers, but its entry route is now understood.

As a key strategic area, Estonia had several Soviet military bases with personnel who would be rotated every few years. The beekeepers amongst them not only had their household goods relocated for them – their bees were air-freighted too. Many personnel were relocated from the Far East and it is thought that along with their bees came the varroa parasite.



Hellar Truuts' apiary in northern Estonia

Photo courtesy of Aleksandra Kik

Pharmaceutical status

Early methods of varroa control were often replaced by Apistan which since its introduction has been classified as a pharmaceutical product in Estonia. From the outset, Zoovetvaru quite deliberately registered it as a pharmaceutical because that designation would bring two main benefits.

“When Apiguard first became available, there were other thymol products on the market but they were of poor quality,” explained Margus. “Apiguard’s pharmaceutical status therefore gave a clear indication that it was of much higher quality and safe to use.”

“Pharmaceutical status also means that the product costs the beekeeper less because VAT (Value Added Tax) on pharmaceutical products is only 5% instead of the usual 18%.”

continued overleaf...

BUZZWORDS

Beekeepers across Europe protest

Honey price and quality have been the focus of a number of beekeeping political demonstrations across Europe over the past few months.

In December, Hungarian beekeepers took to the streets in Brussels protesting about cheap honey imports from Asia and South America which they claim do not meet EU standards.

In February, Extramaduran beekeepers in Spain protested outside their government’s Department of Agriculture about the threat from cheap imports of Chinese honey which they said did not have to meet EU standards.

Varroa agency

On 1 July 2005, New Zealand set up Varroa Agency Inc (VAI), an organisation made up of local government and beekeeping interests in South Island, New Zealand. Varroa hasn’t yet been identified in the South Island and VAI wants to keep it that way. Is this the world’s first varroa agency?

Varroa-free zone

Newfoundland and Labrador in eastern Canada seem to be free of varroa. The local state has banned the import of bees to try to maintain that status. As far as we know, the only other major regions where varroa has not yet been identified are Hawaii, Australia and South Island, New Zealand.

Estonian Factfile

Population: 1.41 m

Capital: Tallinn

Area: 45,227 sq km

Climate: maritime, wet moderate winters cool summers

Language: Estonian (official) 67%, Russian 30%

Agriculture: 4.1% of GDP

Landuse: arable & permanent crops 16.5%

Labour force: 11% in agriculture

Beekeepers: 7,600

Professional Beekeepers: about 70 full-time, 250 part-time

Bee colonies: 60,000

Honey production: c1m kg

Honey consumption: c 750 g / person / year

DISTRIBUTOR FEATURE**View from the Baltic**
...continued from page 3

Zoovetvaru doesn't sell Vita products directly to beekeepers, but supplies several pharmacies and vets throughout Estonia. Since the products do not require prescriptions, most sales are via the pharmacies with which Zoovetvaru has agreed a relatively low mark-up which ensures that beekeepers do not pay inflated prices.

Since varroa resistant to pyrethroids have appeared, beekeepers are looking to other methods like Apiguard to control varroa. Although a number of treatments are being used – with varying degrees of success – only Apiguard and Apistan are registered as treatments.

Other diseases

While EFB and acarine are not major problems in Estonia, AFB is quite common. Chalkbrood is becoming more prevalent possibly because of the effects of global warming producing longer springs and longer and wetter autumns.

The impact of EU membership

Along with nine other countries, Estonia entered the European Union (EU) in 2004. As yet, the enlarged market has meant little to honey producers since most of their produce is consumed within Estonia, but there have been other effects upon beekeeping.

The story that has grabbed the headlines has been the huge purchases of sugar before Estonia entered the EU. Realising that sugar prices would quadruple on EU entry, beekeepers and others appear to have bought up large stocks. But now the EU is claiming that Estonia stockpiled the sugar and is fining the government €5 million. The dispute is ongoing as is the impact of much higher sugar prices on Estonian



Hellar Truuts with modified Estonian standard hive – Carnica and Italian bees on 22-23 comb brood boxes.

beekeeping.

But EU entry has also brought clear benefits. Estonia is receiving significant EU funding for a three year programme to promote beekeeping and improve technical support, research and quality standards.

“Our beekeeping industry is increasing in size and improving its methods,” said Margus. “I think it would benefit from beekeeper registration and even better regulation of treatments to ensure that consumers get top quality produce.”

Estonian Honey

Much Estonian honey is a blend of forest and grassland nectar sources. Some prized, very aromatic – almost spicy – honey comes from two Estonian Baltic islands where black alder and sea milkwort are important bee forage.

Aleksander Kilk, a leading Estonian beekeeper says: “Near the Baltic, the average honey-crop is about 15-20 kg per hive, but inland it can be 40-45kg or even higher.”

“There is a great demand for home-produced honey – we import only 15% of our honey,” says Margus Kuklane of Zoovetvaru. “A lot of Estonian honey is sold directly to consumers from the farmgate. There is a tradition amongst keen consumers to travel to the best areas in summer and autumn to buy honey in bulk direct from the producers.”

BUZZWORDS**Ups and downs of Estonian beekeeping**

As a result of the ravages of World War II, the number of hives in Estonia fell from 110,000 to a mere 17,000. Then under the Soviets the number rose to 106,000 in 1974. But the arrival of varroa and the collapse of beekeeping structures when the Soviet Union disintegrated saw the figure plummet to just 30,000 in 1992. Today the number is increasing again and stands at around 60,000 hives tended by 7,600 beekeepers

Beekeeping has long been an “alternative” occupation or hobby in Estonia. Under the Soviets, it was one occupation that the state didn't know about and couldn't control! Today, as in many parts of Europe, people are seeking natural treatments to the varroa problem and an “alternative” approach continues.

Vita products

Apistan
Varroa control strips
(pyrethroid)

Apiguard
Varroa control gel (thymol)

EFB Testing Kit
European Foulbrood hiveside test

AFB Testing Kit
American Foulbrood hiveside test

B401
Biological wax moth control

**NEWS
MITE**

The newsletter for distributors of Vita (Europe) Ltd. mite control products.

Produced by Palam Communications
www.palam.co.uk



Vita (Europe) Limited
21/23 Wote Street
Basingstoke, Hants RG21 7NE
United Kingdom

Telephone: +44 (0)1256 473175
Fax: +44 (0)1256 473179
Website: www.vita-europe.com